

SYNTAX: What is it ?

Structure and **Grouping** of words into sentences.

Study of Rules governing the above.

In its broader meaning , it is the study of Syntactic Knowledge (Competence).

Syntax= Grammar

Grammar= Theory of Language

Humans understand and produce an **infinite** number of sentences they've never heard before.

Sparrows tango on the trees !

Grammar understands and produces **long sentences**

(Recursiveness)

John told about the problem that you faced when you went to the hotel that has large meeting rooms in which you conferences that deal with the country's political problems that people are fed up with and intend to.....

Grammar determines **Grammatical Relations**.

Bill killed John. John killed

Grammar (Syntax) precedes meaning ! How ?

Sentences without meaning but with syntax:

Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

*Green sleep colourless sleep furiously.

Sentences consist of units (components) that combine together according to certain rules.

The rules are the reflection of how the human brain stores language knowledge.

The rules are finite.

The knowledge and the use are infinite.

Many approaches have been proposed to study Syntax / Grammar.

Generative Grammar is a particular approach to the study of syntax.

Noam Chomsky launched GG back in the 1950s for the purpose of attempting to provide a set of rules that correctly predict which word combinations are correct.

The leading titles : Syntactic Structures (1957)

Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (1965)

The theory is Generative ?

It is mathematical : $4x+2y$

When x and y are given the value of a number, the operation 'generates' a different set each time the number values change.

The generation is 'endless'.

The sentences of language are compared to mathematical operations.

The rules of language are said to be **EXPLICIT**.

The explicit rules of language can **produce** all sentences that are **WELL-FORMED** and **block** all the sentences that are **ILL-FORMED**.

EXPLICIT RULES = GENERATIVE GRAMMAR

GG defines the syntactic structures of a language.

The rules are FINITE but the structures generated or blocked are INFINITE.

NOTATION :

Mathematics operates with symbols ; GG as well.

Exs: S(entence) ; N(oun) ; Art(icle) ; P(hrase)..

NP → Art N

A noun phrase **consists of** an article and a noun.

..... **rewrites as**.....

Rewriting Rules

The rule is formal , and it says that a Noun Phrase in a language , say English , is generated by juxtaposing an Article to a Noun.

The book ; the boy ; the room ; the man....

However,

The happy man

NP-> Art Adj N

The very happy man

NP->Art Adv Adj N

The really very happy man

NP->Art Adv1 Adv2 Adj N

The whole phrase can be replaced by a Personal Pronoun ,
'he'.

NP-> Art Adv1 Adv2 Adj <N; Pro>

The really very happy man who won the prize.

NP->Art Adv1 Adv2 Adj <N;Pro> S

<....> either.... or ...

Apart from 'man' (or the Pronoun 'he' that substitutes for it),
all the other units / CONSTITUENTS are optional.

(...) optional

The rule then is :

NP-> (Art) (Adv1) (Adv2) (Adj) < N ; Pro> (S)

N is the head constituent.

The others are complements of the head.

Each phrase is named after its head.

XP..... where X is the head.

XP is a phrase ; its head is X. XP is phrasal ; X is lexical.

Let's recap:

Syntax is about 'sentence structure' , not to be confused with meaning → Syntactic Organisation → Grammaticality

Syntactic Knowledge

The structure of language , any language , is 'arbitrary'.

----- is 'productive'

ALD=Acquisition Language Device

Universalism = L

Parameters = I

To understand how language structure works , and hence how the human brain works , we need to model syntax , that is to suggest 'type of syntactic analysis' to account for how the language human faculty reflects how the human brain is what it is , that is 'unique'.

Syntactic Analysis:

Traditional Grammar : Prescriptive

Modern Approaches:

ICA = Immediate Constituent Analysis

Children love ice-cream.

(Children love ice-cream).

((Children)(love ice-cream))

((Children)((love)(ice-cream)))

Constituents , from the largest to the smallest.